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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes survey data from 423 parents at 6 high schools in Maryland -2 rural, 2 urban, and 2 suburban. Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the effects of the high schools' programs of partnership on parental attitudes and reports of involvement in their teens' learning both at home and at school. The findings show that parental attitudes toward school are positively influenced by schools' partnership programs. Further, the study suggests that different types of school practices result in different parental involvement behaviors. Specifically, parental reports of involvement at home are positively and significantly influenced by school practices that assist parenting and facilitate interactions with teens on learning activities at home. Similarly, parental reports of involvement at home are most strongly influenced by school practices to involve families. The results remain constant when controlling on family and student background characteristics such as race, gender, and academic performance, and on parental employment and educational background. It is concluded that high schools that develop strong programs of partnership that include practices for different types of involvement are likely to improve parental attitudes toward the school and encourage greater family involvement at school and at home. (Contains 5 tables and 26 references.) (SLD/Author)

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CRESPAR

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGH SCHOOLS

The Parents' Perspective

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Report No. 32 / February 1999

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK

Johns Hopkins University & Howard University

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The Parents' Perspective

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The Center

Every child has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Yet far too many children, especially those from poor and minority families, are placed at risk by school practices that are based on a sorting paradigm in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower quality education and lower quality futures. The sorting perspective must be replaced by a "talent development" model that asserts that all children are capable of succeeding in a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support.

The mission of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) is to conduct the research, development, evaluation, and dissemination needed to transform schooling for students placed at risk. The work of the Center is guided by three central themes — ensuring the success of all students at key development points, building on students' personal and cultural assets, and scaling up effective programs — and conducted through seven research and development programs and a program of institutional activities.

CRESPAR is organized as a partnership of Johns Hopkins University and Howard University, in collaboration with researchers at the University of California at Santa Barbara, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Chicago, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, University of Memphis, Haskell Indian Nations University, and University of Houston-Clear Lake.

CRESPAR is supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students (At-Risk Institute), one of five institutes created by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination and Improvement Act of 1994 and located within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) at the U.S. Department of Education. The At-Risk Institute supports a range of research and development activities designed to improve the education of students at risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage.

Abstract

This study analyzes survey data from 423 parents at six high schools in Maryland — two rural, two urban, and two suburban. Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the effects of the high schools' programs of partnership on parental attitudes and reports of involvement in their teens' learning at home and school. The findings show that parental attitudes toward school are positively influenced by schools' programs of partnership. Further, the study suggests that different types of school practices result in different parental involvement behaviors. Specifically, parental reports of involvement at home are positively and significantly influenced by school practices that assist parenting and facilitate interactions with teens on learning activities at home. Similarly, parental reports of involvement at school are most strongly influenced by school practices that encourage volunteering and participation in school decision making. School communications are positively and significantly correlated with all other school practices to involve families. The results remain constant when controlling on family and student background characteristics such as race, gender, and academic performance, and on parental employment and educational background. The authors conclude that high schools that develop strong programs of partnership that include practices for different types of involvement are likely to improve parental attitudes toward the school and encourage greater family involvement at school and at home.

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Introduction

As children mature into adolescence, family involvement in their learning remains important. Family involvement practices at home and at school have been found to influence secondary school students' academic achievement, school attendance, and graduation and college matriculation rates (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Plank & Jordan, 1997). Despite its importance, however, families' active involvement in their children's education declines as they progress from elementary school to middle and high school (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Lee, 1994). Research suggests that schools can reverse the decline in parent involvement by developing comprehensive programs of partnership (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein & Connors, 1994). To better understand the relationship between programs of partnership and parent involvement at the high school level, this study examines the effects of different types of high school partnership practices on parents' attitudes toward school and on parents' reports of involvement in their teens' learning at home and at school.

Previous Research

Research illustrating the importance of parent involvement for the school success of adolescents spans nearly two decades. Duncan (1969), for example, compared the attendance, achievement, and drop-out rate of two junior high classes. In one class, students' parents had individual meetings with counselors before their children entered junior high school. In the other class, students' parents did not meet with counselors. After three years, students whose parents had met individually with the school counselors had significantly higher attendance, better grade point averages, and lower drop-out rates.

More recently, Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) studied the effects of parent involvement in high school activities on student outcomes. The study was based on questionnaire data from students, parents, and teachers at six San Francisco Bay Area high schools. The authors found that regardless of educational background, adolescents whose parents attended school functions received higher grades than adolescents whose parents did not. The authors also found that the lowest levels of family involvement in school programs and processes were among the parents of average students, minority students, students in step-families, and students in single-parent households. The authors concluded that without interventions designed to encourage greater family involvement in these subgroups, educational and economic inequalities will persist for many poor, minority students.

Using nationally representative student, parent, and school administrator data from follow-up surveys of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Plank and Jordan

(1997) found that communication and discussion among high school students, parents, and school personnel about academic matters and post-secondary preparation increased students' chances of enrolling in four-year colleges or other post-secondary educational institutions. The authors noted that parent-student-school discussions should begin prior to the sophomore year to have the greatest impact on students' plans after high school. They also emphasized the importance of parent-student-school connections for low income students: fewer qualified students in this population advance to four-year colleges or other post-secondary institutions.

Despite these and similar findings, most families are not involved in their adolescents' learning at school or at home (Epstein & Lee, 1995; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). A study conducted by Search Institute found that four practices of parental involvement — discussions about homework, discussions about school and school work, helping with homework, and attending school meetings and events — decline significantly between grades six and twelve. The study revealed that by the junior or senior year in high school relatively few adolescents have parents who maintain an active interest in their education (George, 1995).

Why aren't more families actively involved in the education of their adolescents? Research suggests that school and family characteristics and experiences significantly affect levels and types of parent involvement. Dornbusch and Glasgow (1996) found that the organizational structure of secondary schools is one factor that often inhibits effective and productive parent-school interaction and communication. The authors argue that because middle and high school students are assigned to multiple teachers and these teachers are responsible for teaching large numbers of students, the nature of teacher-student relationships, as well as teacher-family relationships, changes. Due to constraints on time and resources, secondary school teachers are less likely to regularly communicate with or encourage the active involvement of the families of all their students.

In a study that examined parent involvement among minority families in Catholic high schools, Bauch (1991) found that socioeconomic status was significantly related to how often African American parents communicated with teachers about school programs and their adolescents' progress. Useem (1992) also found that educational background affected families' involvement in their young adolescents' placement in the mathematics tracking system. According to Useem, "the involvement of highly educated parents in their children's placement at critical decision points in the tracking system is one mechanism by which educational advantage is transmitted from one generation to the next." These findings of the influence of socioeconomic status on parent involvement support the work of other social scientists, who contend that parent involvement in school activities is lower among low-

income and minority families than other families due to feelings of alienation (Calabrese, 1990; Winters, 1993), distrust (Lightfoot, 1978), or a devaluation of their cultural resources (Lareau, 1989).

Epstein, however, argues that all schools can encourage greater participation among all families, including minority and low-income families, by developing comprehensive programs of partnership that build meaningful connections between families and schools. Based on earlier data, she contends:

> Status variables are not the most important measures for understanding parent involvement. At all grade levels, the evidence suggests that school policies, teacher practices, and family practices are more important than race, parent education, family size, marital status, and even grade level in determining whether parents continue to be part of their children's education (p. 109, 1990).

Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) also found that schools play a central role in determining levels of parent involvement in students' learning. In a study of six high schools in California and Arizona that were providing an environment in which language minority students and others achieve academic success, the authors found that the schools actively encouraged parent involvement. Through newsletters, parent advisory committees, parent nights, and student-parent-teacher conferences, the high schools fostered families' active participation in their teens' education.

To further explore the effects of high schools' programs of partnership on parent attitudes and reports of involvement in their teens' learning at home and school, this study analyzes survey data from parents in six high schools in Maryland — two rural, two urban, and two suburban. The high schools used Epstein's framework of family involvement to begin developing comprehensive partnership programs, including practices for each of six types of involvement. The types are: (1) parenting — helping all families establish home environments that support children as students; (2) communicating — designing and conducting effective two-way forms of communication about school programs and children's progress; (3) volunteering — recruiting and organizing help and support for school functions and activities; (4) learning at home — providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with school work and related activities; (5) decision making — including parents in school decisions; and (6) collaborating with the community — identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students, and their families, and from schools, families, and students to support the community. (For a more detailed discussion, see Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 1997.)

Background

In 1991, six high schools in Maryland began to work with researchers to better understand school-family-community connections at the secondary level. These schools were participating in the Maryland's Tomorrow program, a state-funded project to reduce high school dropout rates by providing students who met certain "at-risk" criteria with extra guidance and counseling services. The program's design also included a family involvement component to encourage greater family participation in students' schooling experience.

Two of the schools were rural, two were suburban, and two were urban. The high schools ranged in size from about 500 to over 1200 students, of whom 20% to 100% were from racial minority groups, and 15% to over 60% were from low-income families. Each of the schools administered surveys to ninth grade teachers, parents, and students to measure each group's perceptions of family involvement in high school. This study analyzes data from 423 parent surveys.

Preliminary descriptive analyses of data from parents elicited a number of important findings about parents' attitudes toward school involvement. Over 90 percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement was needed at the high school level. More than 80 percent of these parents indicated that they wanted to be more involved in their teens' learning and needed more information in order to effectively help teens at home. Few parents reported being involved in school activities such as volunteering, fund raising, or committee participation. However, 75% of the parents reported that the school had never contacted them about such activities and felt that such contact was important for their teens' school success. About 72 percent of the parents surveyed believed that high schools should start new programs or improve their present programs of partnership to help families understand more about adolescent development and other topics related to their teens' growth and learning (Epstein & Connors, 1994; Connors & Epstein, 1994). The present report further analyzes these data to determine the effects of different school practices of school-family-community partnership on families' attitudes and levels of involvement in the education of their teens.

Data Sources and Methods

The surveys were designed to help the high schools take stock of where they were starting from in their connections with families and to determine areas requiring growth and further development. The parent surveys were completed by the parent or guardian who had the most contact with the high school about the teen. The majority of surveys were completed

by students' mothers, aunts, or grandmothers, although 15% of the surveys were completed by fathers or grandfathers.

The parent survey took about 20 minutes to complete and contained scales measuring parents' involvement in their teens' schooling, attitudes toward the school, and perceptions of the schools' programs of partnership. The survey also included items to measure family and student background variables, including race, parent education, and work status. For a full description of the survey scales, see Epstein, Connors-Tadros, Horsey, & Simon (1996).

Parent Scales

Dependent Variables: Reports of Family Involvement. The dependent measures used in this study are Parent Attitudes about High School, Parent Involvement at Home, and Parent Involvement at School. The Parent Attitudes about High School scale contains 14 items and has an internal reliability coefficient of .86. Items in the scale measure the extent to which parents perceive that their teen's school is a good and positive learning environment (for example, *This is a very good high school*; *The teachers here care about my teenager*; and *This school is a good place for students and for parents)*. The parent was asked to select a response on a four-point range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The Parent Involvement at Home scale contains 14 items that measure the extent to which families reinforce students' learning and school engagement at home. The scale has an internal reliability coefficient of .82 and contains items such as, *I talk to my ninth grader about school*; *I help my teen plan time for homework, chores, and other responsibilities*, and *I tell my teen how important school is*. The parent or guardian completing the survey was able to select a response on a five-point range from "never" to "I do this everyday."

The Parent Involvement at School scale contained eight items with an internal reliability coefficient of .81. The scale measured the extent to which parents supported the school and students by participating in activities at the school. For example, parents were asked how frequently they attended open houses or back-to-school nights, attended parent-teacher conferences, or worked as volunteers. Responses ranged from "never," indicating low parental involvement at school, to "many times," indicating high parental involvement at school.

Independent Variables: Reports of School Programs and Practices. The independent variables in the study were measured by six scales:

- Parent Reports of School Type 1 Activities — Parenting;
- Parent Reports of School Type 2 Activities — Communicating;

- Parent Reports of School Type 3 Activities — Frequency of Requests from School to Volunteer;
- Parent Reports of School Type 4 Activities — Learning at Home;
- Parent Reports of School Type 5 Activities — Decision Making, and
- School Support for Parent Involvement.

No measure for schools' practices of Type 6 Activities — Collaborating with Community — was available in these data. For detailed descriptions and reliabilities of these scales, and the student and teacher scales, see Epstein, Connors-Tadros, Horsey, and Simon (1996).

Background Variables

Several student and family background variables were also measured. Parents' *race/ethnicity* was coded as a dichotomous variable (White = 1; Black and Latino = 0). The variable *single parent* indicates the number of adults at home (1 adult at home = 1; more than one = 0). *Employment* was coded as a dichotomous variable (parents working full time = 1; parents not employed outside the home or employed part-time = 0). *Parent education* is a continuous variable measuring reported levels of educational attainment from less than a high school diploma to having received an advanced degree (coded 0 to 6). Parents also reported the *gender* of their teen(s) (female = 1; male = 0); the *number of children in the home* (coded as a continuous variable), and *how the student is doing in high school* (coded from mostly Fs = 0 to mostly As = 5).

Data Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the independent effects that the schools' partnership programs to encourage parental involvement had on (1) parents' attitudes about the high schools and (2) reports of involvement in their teens' education at home and at school. Each dependent variable was predicted by two equations. The first equation tested the effects of the family and student background variables on the dependent variable. Then, variables measuring the schools' different types of family partnership practices were included in the second equation to determine the effects of these practices on parental attitudes and behaviors, net of the effects of the background variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the frequencies for the family and student background variables. The sample was largely White (73%) and Black (21%). The majority of parents (73%) reported working full time or part time. About 18% of respondents headed households as single parents. On average, the families included two children at home. The educational backgrounds of the parents varied widely. About 12% reported not having received a high school diploma, while close to 15% reported having received a college or advanced degree. Most had a high school diploma (32%) or some post-secondary education or training (39%).

The majority of parents (about 60%) reported that their children were earning mostly Bs and Cs in their school work. Fourteen percent reported that their children were earning mostly As, and over 20 percent of the respondents reported that their children were earning mostly Ds and Fs.

Parent Attitudes About High School. Table 2 shows the zero-order correlations of the background and school program variables with the key dependent variables in the study. There is a significant, positive correlation between how well students are doing in school and their parents' attitudes toward the school (top, column 1). Parents whose teens are doing well give their schools more positive ratings. No other background variable was strongly correlated with parental attitudes about their teens' high schools. Also, there is a strong, positive correlation between parental attitudes toward their teens' high schools and measures of the schools' overall program and different types of partnership practices (bottom, column 1). High schools that reach out to families are more likely to be rated positively by those families than are high schools that do not.

Parent Involvement at School. Parental reports of involvement at school were significantly and positively correlated with several background variables included in the study, including how the student is doing in school, parental education, and parental employment (top, column 2, Table 2). There is a significant correlation between families' reports of their involvement at school and all school partnership practices (bottom, column 2), but most strongly with school practices that encourage volunteering (Type 3), and those that involve families in school decision making (Type 5).

Parent Involvement at Home. Table 2 also shows that there is a significant correlation between parental education and parental reports of involvement in their teens' learning at home (top, column 3). Parents who have more formal education are more likely to report being involved with their teens' learning at home than are parents who have less formal education. In addition, there are equally strong correlations between schools' practices of Type 1–Parenting and Type 4–Learning at Home and parental reports of involvement at

home (bottom, column 3). These correlations suggest that certain high school practices can influence parental involvement in their teens' development and learning activities. To learn more about the basic relationships shown in Table 2, a series of regression equations were tested.

Table 1
Frequencies for Family and Student Background Variables (N = 423)

Variable	Value Label	Frequency	Percent
Race/Ethnicity	White	309	73.0
	Black	90	21.3
	Hispanic	5	1.2
	No response	19	4.5
Employment	Work full time	245	57.9
	Work part time	64	15.1
	Does not work	106	25.1
	No response	8	1.9
Number of adults in the home	Single parent	78	18.4
	More than one adult	326	77.1
	No response	19	4.5
Number of children in the home	0	2	.5
	1	116	27.4
	2	171	40.4
	3	71	16.8
	4	31	7.3
	5	8	1.9
	6 or more	6	1.4
	No response	18	4.3
Parent education	Less than HS diploma	51	12.1
	HS diploma	137	32.4
	Other training or ed	51	12.1
	Some college	116	27.4
	College degree	43	10.2
	Advanced degree	21	4.9
	No response	4	.9
How the student is doing in high school	Mostly Fs	21	5.0
	Mostly Ds	70	16.5
	Mostly Cs	141	33.3
	Mostly Bs	114	27.0
	Mostly As	61	14.4
	No response	16	3.8
Student gender	Female	195	47.8
	Male	213	52.2

Table 2
Zero-Order Correlations of Background and School Program with Parental Attitudes and Involvement at Home and School

Variable	Parent Attitudes about High School	Parent Involvement at School	Parent Involvement at Home
Background Variables			
Race/Ethnicity (White)	.056	.109	-.082
Employment (Work full-time)	-.052	.132**	.041
# of adults in the home (Single parent)	-.064	-.092	.043
# of children at home	-.050	-.075	-.008
Parent education	.057	.247**	.143**
How the student is doing in h.s.	.354**	.272**	-.015
Student gender (female)	.093	-.012	.034
Parental Perceptions of School Program and Specific Practices of Involvement			
School Support for Parent Involvement	.549**	.224**	.106
Parent Reports of School Type 1 Activities — Parenting	.531**	.178**	.134**
Parent Reports of School Type 2 Activities — Communicating	.525**	.206**	.033
Parent Reports of School Type 3 Activities — Frequency of Requests from School to Volunteer	.311**	.451**	.062
Parent Reports of School Type 4 Activities — Learning At Home	.424**	.133**	.150**
Parent Reports of School Type 5 Activities — Decision Making	.338**	.286**	.077

** .120 or higher is significant at p<.01

N = 423

Table 3
The Effects of High School Programs of Partnership on Family Attitude toward School

	Equation 1		Equation 2	
Variables	β	t	β	t
Background Variables				
Race of Parent (White = 1)	.02	.48	-.02	-.54
Parent Work Full-Time	-.09	-1.64	-.06	-1.33
Parent Work Part-Time	.02	.45	.02	.38
Single Parent	-.06	-1.27	-.04	-.83
Number of Children at Home	-.08	-1.69	-.07	1.76
Parent Education	.02	.37	.00	.00
How the Student is Doing in H.S.	.35***	7.33	.24***	5.56
Sex of Student (Female = 1)	.07	1.50	.04	1.04
School Overall Program of Partnerships				
School Support for Parent Involvement			.48***	11.46
Adjusted R Square			.13	.35
Total # of Respondents			423	423

***p<.001

Table 3 shows the effects of high school partnership programs on families' attitudes toward school. When only background variables are considered, student academic performance ($\beta = .35$, $p<.001$) is the only significant predictor of family attitude toward school. Parents whose teens are academically successful are more likely to rate the high school positively than are parents whose teens are not doing well academically. When the strength of the school's overall program of involvement is added to the regression equation, the variance explained by the equation is increased from 13 percent to 35 percent. Of the variables examined, the strength of a school's overall program of school-family partnership is the strongest predictor of family attitude toward the school ($\beta = .48$, $p<.001$). With student academic achievement and all other background characteristics statistically controlled, parents in schools with stronger programs of partnership are more likely to rate the school positively. In other analyses not reported here, we measured the effect of school context on families' attitudes. Dummy variables for five schools with one school as the reference category were created and added to the equation. When these variables were added, there were no changes in the effects described above, and only a 2% increase in the variance explained (from 35% to 37%).

Table 4
The Effects of Different Types of Partnership Practices on Family Reports of Involvement at High School

	Equation 1		Equation 2	
Variables	β	t	β	t
Background Variables				
Race of Parent (White = 1)	.09	1.71	.05	-1.07
Parent Work Full-Time	.10	1.75	.08	1.49
Parent Work Part-Time	.06	1.03	.05	.88
Single Parent	-.06	-1.18	-.03	-.72
Number of Children at Home	-.06	-1.21	-.04	-.99
Parent Education	.20***	4.09	.15**	3.16
How the Student is Doing in H.S.	.23***	4.75	.17***	3.55
Sex of Student (Female = 1)	-.02	-.49	-.02	-.48
Parental Reports of Practices for Different Types of Involvement				
Parent Reports of School Type 1 Activities — Parenting			-.06	-.81
Parent Reports of School Type 2 Activities — Communicating			-.05	-.64
Parent Reports of School Type 3 Activities — Frequency of Requests to Volunteer			.35***	6.95
Parent Reports of School Type 4 Activities — Learning at Home			-.03	-.41
Parent Reports of School Type 5 Activities — Decision Making			.20***	3.66
Adjusted R Square			.13	.27
Total # of Respondents			423	423

***p<.001; **p<.01

Table 4 shows the effects of different types of partnership practices on parents' reports of their involvement at the school. As shown in the first equation in Table 4, parent education ($\beta = .20$, $p<.01$) and student academic performance ($\beta = .23$, $p<.01$) are significant predictors of family involvement at school. Parents who have more formal education and those whose teens are doing well academically are more likely to report that they are involved in their teens' high schools.

Equation 2 shows the effects on parental involvement at high school of different types of partnership practices. Of the five types of involvement, school practices for Type 3–Volunteering ($\beta = .35$, $p<.01$) and Type 5–Decision Making ($\beta = .20$, $p<.01$) have a significant, independent, and positive influence on parents' reported involvement in school activities. This indicates that if schools encourage parents to volunteer or participate on school decision making committees, more families will become involved in these school-based activities, regardless of their formal education or their children's academic achievement. The results further suggest that schools may be able to offset the influence of educational background or student success on parental involvement at school by developing strong partnership programs that encourage all families' participation in school events and decisions.

The variance explained by the addition of the partnership variables increases from .13 to .27. The addition of the school dummy variables does not change the effects shown in Equation 2 and increases the adjusted R square by only 1%.

Table 5
The Effects of Different Types of Partnership Practices on Family Reports of Involvement At Home

	Equation 1		Equation 2	
Variables	β	t	β	t
Background Variables				
Race of Parent (White = 1)	-.07	-1.22	-.08	-1.37
Parent Work Full-Time	-.01	-.13	-.01	-.14
Parent Work Part-Time	-.06	-1.00	-.07	-1.13
Single Parent	.01	.19	.01	.22
Number of Children at Home	-.01	-.25	-.02	-.46
Parent Education	.15***	2.57	.16**	2.78
How the Student is Doing in H.S.	-.04	-.70	-.09	-1.51
Sex of Student (Female = 1)	.03	.58	.02	.46
Student in Academic Program	.01	.16	.04	.68
Parental Reports of Practices for Different Types of Involvement				
Parent Reports of School Type 1 Activities — Parenting			.17*	2.08
Parent Reports of School Type 2 Activities — Communicating			-.23**	-2.86
Parent Reports of School Type 3 Activities — Frequency of Requests to Volunteer			.03	.51
Parent Reports of School Type 4 Activities — Learning at Home			.21**	2.75
Parent Reports of School Type 5 Activities — Decision Making			.01	.11
Adjusted R Square			.01	.05
Total # of Respondents			423	423

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Table 5 reports the effects of different types of partnership practices on parents' reports of involvement at home. Perhaps the greatest challenge for high schools is to help families' understand how they can encourage and guide their adolescents' learning at home in developmentally appropriate ways. Equation 1 in Table 5 indicates that parents who have more formal education are more likely to report assisting their children at home than are parents who have less formal education. Indeed, of all the background variables tested, parent education ($\beta = .15$, $p<.001$) is the only one that significantly influences families' reports of involvement in their teens' learning at home.

Equation 2 in Table 5 shows the effects of different types of partnership practices on parents' reports of involvement at home. With these variables included in the equation, the strongest predictor of family involvement at home is the strength of the school's practices of

Type 4 activities–Learning at Home ($\beta = .21$, $p<.01$). Equation 2 also shows that schools' Type 1 practices that help families strengthen parenting skills also significantly predict parents' reports of involvement at home ($\beta = .17$, $p<.05$). The results reported in Table 5 suggest that high schools with partnership programs that include practices supporting family involvement in their children's learning at home increase the likelihood that, regardless of their formal education, parents will conduct more supervisory activities and interact with their teens around homework.

The negative and significant ($\beta = -.23$, $p<.01$) influence of schools' practices of Type 2 involvement–Communicating on parent involvement at home is most likely due to multicollinearity. The variable has a high zero order correlation with both Type 4 involvement ($r = .70$, $p<.001$) and Type 1 involvement ($r = .68$, $p<.001$), which are significantly linked to parents' reports of involvement at home. These high correlations underscore the significance of good communication to the successful implementation of the other types of partnership practices.

The addition of the school dummy variables does not change the relationships shown in Equation 2 and increases the adjusted R square by 1% to .06. The low R square indicates that more research is needed on factors affecting parental involvement in their teens' learning at home. Such research will help educators better plan and implement school practices to help families communicate with their adolescents about homework and guide their adolescents' school-related decisions about courses, summer programs, and future educational and employment plans. Other studies indicate that ongoing parent-child communication and interaction through high school have positive effects on students' skills and avoidance of harmful behaviors (Blum, Rinehard, & Associates, 1997).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study's findings suggest that when schools develop programs of partnership that include practices for different types of parental involvement, families respond favorably. Families' attitudes toward school are positively influenced by schools' programs of partnership. Further, the results indicate that different types of partnership practices result in different parental involvement behaviors. This suggests that comprehensive programs of partnership that include practices for each of the six major types of involvement will ensure that more families are provided the guidance and information necessary to become effectively involved in their teens' education in various ways.

For example, parental reports of involvement at home are positively and significantly influenced by Type 1 Involvement–Parenting and Type 4 Involvement–Learning at Home. Many high schools, however, do not provide families with information on how to support their adolescents' learning at home. Most high schools assign homework that is designed to be done alone, without conversations or interactions with families (Epstein & Lee, 1995). Most families know very little about high school course offerings, the consequences of special school programs for student advancement or remediation, and requirements for promotion, graduation, or post-secondary education and are, therefore, less equipped to be effectively involved in their teens' learning. As this study confirms, this is especially true for parents who have less formal education. Plank and Jordan (1996) report that adolescents whose families cannot or do not discuss course selections and school plans with them during high school are less likely to attend college than adolescents whose families engage in these discussions and activities at home. However, even parents who have less formal education can become more involved in their teens' education if schools conduct partnership practices that provide families with useful information and guidance.

Similarly, parental reports of involvement at school are significantly and positively influenced by Type 3 Involvement–Volunteering and Type 5 Involvement–School Decision Making. High school educators are becoming increasingly aware of ways in which volunteers and parent associations can assist in meeting the needs of high school youth. For example, Sanders (1998) reports that high school teachers voice a need for volunteers to assist with activities such as attendance and hallway monitoring and academic tutoring. Further, administrators state the importance of having viable PTAs or PTOs that can, among other things, advocate for improved school resources. This study suggests that when high schools develop partnership practices that encourage families to volunteer or become active participants in school decision making, families respond.

As indicated previously, school practices for Type 2–Communicating are essential for improving the other types of involvement. Many high schools begin developing their programs of partnership by focusing exclusively on communications about school programs and students' needs and progress (Sanders, 1998). In an early study of home-school communication at the secondary level, Gotts (1983) reported that families responded positively to receiving two types of information from high schools. First, families responded favorably to receiving regular and timely newsletters detailing the school's programs and extracurricular events and activities. Most families in the study (90%) reported reading school newsletters. Second, families at the secondary level wanted to receive early notification when their teens were having difficulty or needed assistance or corrective action. Families also wanted information on appropriate courses of action to address difficulties. The author concluded that

families of high school students, contrary to stereotype, have strong interests in their adolescents' school performance and school activities and programs. Schools can encourage this interest and promote stronger partnerships with families at each grade level by communicating with them regularly about the school and their children. To do so effectively, however, schools must tailor their communications so that they are understandable to all families, regardless of educational or linguistic background (Epstein, 1995; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990).

The findings of this study suggest that high schools that develop programs of partnership, including practices for different types of involvement, are likely to improve parental attitudes toward the school and enable more families to become involved in their teens' education at school and at home. Some families will be actively involved in the education of their adolescents without the school's assistance. However, this study suggests that in high schools that have comprehensive programs of partnership, more families, including families with lower educational backgrounds, will become involved in their adolescents' learning and school success.

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